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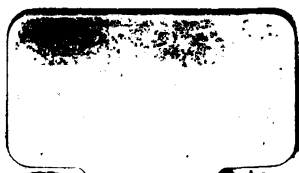
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S P E E C H

OF THE

DUKE OF WELLINGTON,

ON THE

MOTION FOR THE SECOND READING

OF THE

REFORM BILL,



IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS,

TUESDAY, 4TH OCTOBER, 1831.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

MDCCCXXXI.

661.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY W. CLOWES,
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S P E E C H,

&c.

I CONCUR, my Lords, entirely with the Noble Lord who spoke last, in the opinion that this measure is a most extensive one. It goes to overturn the whole system of our representation ; it affects the counties, towns, and boroughs ; it destroys or disturbs every existing interest ; and, as the Noble Lord said, it will require further changes. It alters all the relations of representation, and even the proportions of the representatives of the different parts of the monarchy. It is the most considerable alteration and change ever proposed. The Noble Lord says it would not be sufficient unless it went to a great extent ; and he tells your Lordships it ought to go to a Committee ; and that we should not reject the measure now, but proceed to consider its details in a Committee. Notwithstanding all the changes it is to effect, it will be followed by other changes, in order to render it fit for working, and adapt it practically to our constitution. Ought we not to know what those changes are before we are called upon to consider this bill in a Committee ?

Before I go any further, I wish to observe on a statement made by the Noble Earl when he introduced the measure. He did me the honour to notice my conduct. The Noble Earl, when he opened the measure to your Lordships, made some observations on me. He seems to prefer that course to explaining or defending his own measures. The Noble Earl seemed to forget that there was any necessity to defend his own measure or explain it to the House, and chose rather to criticise me and my language, and the language of my Right Honourable Friend, and our conduct and language in Parliament during the last Session. The Noble Earl thought proper to find fault with my language relating to the constitution of Parliament, and attributed to me, and to what I said in Parliament, the spirit of reform in the country, and the breaking up of the late Government. The Noble Earl found fault with my opinion of Parliament ; but what had the Parliament done up to the moment when I was speaking to make it undeserving of our approbation ? My Noble Friend, who has spoken with

great ability, regretted that I should have made the statement I did make to your Lordships of the character and conduct of Parliament. My Lords, I beg my Noble Friend and the Noble Earl to recollect, that when I spoke of the Parliament, I spoke as the King's Minister, and that it is the duty of the King's Minister to support the institutions, of the country: it had never, when I was in office, been the practice for the King's Ministers to give up the institutions of the country, and abandon them the moment they were attacked.

But, my Lords, if I wanted an example of the opinions of the value of the House of Commons, I should find it in the opinion of the Noble Earl the last time, I believe, that he spoke of the House of Commons. In the month of February, 1817, the Noble Lord said, 'Constituted as it now was, he in his conscience believed that the House of Commons was, of all other institutions, in all the other countries of the world, the institution best calculated for the general protection of the subject. Supported by the people in temperate and firm claims for redress, it was not only able, but certain to remedy every wrong. It was capable to act as the most efficient control upon the executive, by diminishing the means of corruption and reducing the pressure of a severe and grinding taxation.' That was the opinion of the Noble Earl himself in 1817; and what, I would ask, had the Parliament done subsequently to deserve the disapprobation of the Noble Earl—what had it done between 1817 and the moment when I pronounced that approbation of Parliament of which my Noble Friend and the Noble Earl have expressed so much disapprobation? When the Noble Earl quotes what I said not quite a twelvemonth ago, he might, I think, quote it correctly. What I said was, that Parliament had done its duty by the country, and enjoyed its confidence. I said, that if I had to create a constitution of Parliament, I could not create that which existed, because I did not believe the wit of man could invent such a system; but I said that I would do my endeavour to establish one like it, in which property, and particularly property in land, should be preponderant. That was what I said; and I afterwards had the satisfaction to hear the Noble Marquess (Lansdowne) deliver a similar opinion. He had stated, that in any system of representation which he could support, property and learning must be preponderant. I said, that I should consider it my duty to resist the adopting of any plan of Reform that should be brought forward: I spoke as a Minister of the Crown, and as a Minister of the Crown I meant to resist Reform.

The Noble Lords say that this statement of mine caused

great enmity to me, and created that spirit of Reform which has since pervaded the whole country. I beg the Noble Earl's pardon; but the spirit of Reform in this country was the consequence of the French Revolution. It is true, that ever since the American war a desire for Parliamentary Reform has been manifested in this country,—it has been manifested particularly when any disturbance or insurrection has occurred in any of the neighbouring foreign countries—above all, since the French Revolution; and when there has been any extraordinary distress or difficulty in the country. At the same time, I believe that, from year to year, the manifestations of such a desire have been less frequent. I have, indeed, the authority of those most friendly to Reform for saying, that the manifestations of the desire for Reform were less frequent till the period of the Revolution of July 1830, than they had formerly been for a number of years. It happened, unfortunately, that a few days before the Ordinances were issued in Paris, his Majesty had dissolved the Parliament. At the elections, my Lords, a strong spirit of Parliamentary Reform was exhibited. In several contests, candidates for seats in Parliament were called upon to pledge themselves upon the subject of Parliamentary Reform. In many contested elections, the contest was decided in favour of the candidate who declared himself a Reformer.

The Noble Earl has likewise referred to what I said on the 2d of November, in this House, as the cause of the disturbed state of the city of London and its neighbourhood, and of the circumstances which occasioned the letter from the Secretary of State to the Lord Mayor, communicating to him, that his Majesty would not visit the city on the 9th of November.

This letter was written on the 7th of November. The circumstances which rendered it necessary to write it were known to the King's servants on the 5th and 6th.

The Noble Lords have the papers in their own hands. I beg to know whether, in their opinion, the information which we had received was sufficient to warrant the advice which we considered it our duty to give our Sovereign, and to obtain his commands, on the 7th of November. The Noble Lords have not themselves thought proper to advise his Majesty as yet to pay a visit to the city. I may fairly presume, therefore, that our advice was judicious on the 7th of November.

But it is said, that the circumstances which rendered this advice necessary were occasioned by what I said in Parliament; that is to say, that having spoken in Parliament on the 2d, the effect produced in the city, and in the neighbourhood, was such, by the 5th, that the King's servants were obliged to ad-

wise the King on the 7th not to visit the city. Is this possible, my Lords? I again call upon the noble Lords to say whether we were or not justified in giving the advice which we did give.

My Lords, the state of the public feeling and opinion in London, as well as in the North of England, and elsewhere in the country, had been influenced by the state of affairs in France, in Belgium, and in other parts of Europe. It was the state of affairs which occasioned those circumstances which induced us to advise the King not to visit the city; and not any opinion of mine on Parliamentary Reform, delivered in this House on the night of the 2d of November, and which could not have been known at all till the 3d, and could not therefore have occasioned, by the 5th, the circumstances to which I have referred. Then the Noble Lord has, notwithstanding my repeated contradictions and explanations, asserted that my opinions upon Parliamentary Reform, as delivered upon the 2d of November, had occasioned the resignation of the King's late Ministers, my colleagues and myself. My Lords, we retired from the King's service on Tuesday, the 16th of November, because we found, that on Monday, the 15th, on an important question, we no longer possessed the confidence of the House of Commons. We decided in consequence to resign, and we actually requested his Majesty to accept our resignation on Tuesday, the day following.

If we had delayed to carry our design into execution, the great question of Parliamentary Reform, in which I cannot but think the interests of the monarchy are involved, would have been discussed in the House of Commons on Tuesday, and those interests defended by a Ministry no longer possessing the confidence of the House, and which must therefore have gone out of office.

If the question, on Monday, the 15th of November, had been that of Parliamentary Reform, it is not clear to me that we should have been in a minority. My reason for being of that opinion is, that it appears on the division, on the second reading of the Noble Lord's Bill in March last, many Members voted against it who had been in the majority on the 15th of November. Whatever might be the degree in which the Members of the late Parliament were pledged to Reform, I think myself justified in the statement, that my opinion upon Parliamentary Reform did not occasion our resignation; and that most probably it was not the cause of the loss of the confidence of the House of Commons. The Noble Lord assumed his office on the 22d of November, and on that day he stated to your Lordships on what principles he intended to conduct

the Government of the country. Among other intentions he stated that of proposing a plan of Parliamentary Reform. He stated, that he had obtained the King's consent to enable him to bring forward this proposition, as the Minister, and with the power and influence of Government. The Noble Lord's words upon that occasion were very remarkable, and deserving of your Lordships' attention.

Your Lordships will observe, that the Noble Lord told you that he intended to found his plan of Reform 'on the basis of the institutions of the country;' and, as he explained, 'a Reform, limited by a desire to stand as far as prudence will permit by the ancient landmarks, and to prevent the sudden disturbance of our settled institutions by too large and extensive changes.' He now tells you, that he had brought in a measure which would effect a great change in them; and the Noble Secretary of State adds, that these changes must be followed by others. They must be so followed, or the government of the country will be impracticable.

A bill was introduced into the other House of Parliament, according to the Noble Lord's plan, which, after long discussion, was read a second time by the decision of a small majority. This measure altered everything,—it changed or destroyed every interest in the country. Instead of proceeding upon the basis of the established institutions, it destroyed them all; and, among other things, altered the relative numbers of the representatives in Parliament from the different kingdoms of the united empire.

It was proposed in the House of Commons, that the proportion of representatives for England should not be diminished, to which proposition, after long debate, the House of Commons agreed by a majority of seven. The principle of the Noble Lord's bill had been agreed to. Why did not the Noble Lords persevere and carry through their bill, making such alterations as might render it palatable to the House of Commons, and consistent with the established practice of the constitution? This did not suit their purpose. They dissolved the Parliament, and advised their Sovereign to appeal to his people. I attribute all our misfortunes to that event. The Noble Lords advised their Sovereign upon that occasion to come to Parliament, and to make this speech:—

'I have come to meet you for the purpose of proroguing this Parliament, with a view to its immediate dissolution.

'I have been induced to resort to this measure for the purpose of ascertaining the sense of my people, in the way in which it may be most constitutionally and authentically expressed, on the expediency of making such changes in the

‘ representation as circumstances may seem to require ; and
 ‘ which, founded upon the acknowledged principles of the
 ‘ constitution, may tend at once to uphold the just rights and
 ‘ prerogatives of the Crown, and to give security to the liberties
 ‘ of my people.’

The dissolution then made, and the speech delivered by his Majesty, were both upon a principle entirely different from that of the precedents according to which the measure was adopted. In 1784, the King, George III., differed from his Ministers upon a great question. They retired from his service, and his Majesty appointed other Ministers. Those Ministers did not enjoy the confidence of the House of Commons, and the King dissolved his Parliament, and put an end to the session, in the words which I am about to read to your Lordships :—

‘ On a full consideration of the present situation of affairs,
 ‘ and of the extraordinary circumstances which have produced
 ‘ it, I am induced to put an end to this session of Parliament.

‘ I feel it a duty I owe to the constitution and to the country,
 ‘ in such a situation, to recur as speedily as possible to the sense
 ‘ of my people by calling a new Parliament.

‘ I trust that this measure will tend to obviate the mischiefs
 ‘ arising from the unhappy divisions and distractions which
 ‘ have lately subsisted ; and that the various important objects
 ‘ which will require consideration may be afterwards proceeded
 ‘ upon with less interruption and happier effect.

‘ I can have no other object but to preserve the true prin-
 ‘ ciples of our free and happy constitution ; and to employ the
 ‘ powers entrusted to me by law for the only good end for
 ‘ which they were given—the good of my people.’

I will not give your Lordships the trouble of listening to the perusal of the case of 1807, which stands precisely upon the same principle as that of 1784. In both, the King differed in opinion with his Ministers and with the Parliament upon measures upon which his Majesty had decided ; and he appealed to the sense of his people, and called upon them to elect a Parliament which should give their confidence to the Ministers of his choice, in carrying on the measures which he approved. The transaction was brought to a close before the appeal was made to the people. The people were not called upon to deliberate upon any measure ; but the appeal to them was rather, it may be said, in favour of the men whom his Majesty had named as his Ministers. In the case of 1831, however, the Noble Lords have advised their Sovereign to refer for discussion to the people—not whether the King was to be supported in naming his Ministers—not whether Parliament is to be reformed, because, upon the principle of reform,

there was a majority in the late House of Commons,—but upon a particular plan of reform, which was accordingly discussed throughout the country.

It is on the ground of the dissolution, and of this speech from the Throne, that I charge the Noble Lords with having excited the spirit which existed in the country at the period of the last general election; and with having been the cause of the unconstitutional practice, hitherto unknown, of electing delegates for a particular purpose to Parliament,—delegates to obey the daily instructions of their constituents, and to be cashiered if they should disobey them, whatever may be their own opinion; instead of being, as they have been hitherto, independent Members of Parliament to deliberate with their colleagues upon matters of common concern, and to decide according to the best of their judgment, after such deliberation and debate. This is an evil of which the country will long feel the consequences, whatever may be the result of these discussions.

My Lords, this measure, thus debated by the people, and thus brought forward by the Government in Parliament, for the decision of Members thus delegated to give it the force of a law, alters everything; and requires, as the Noble Secretary of State says, still further alterations in the State, in order to render it practicable to carry on the Government at all.

I will not, at this late hour of the night, enter much into the details of the system proposed, which have been well considered and exposed by my Noble friends the Noble Earl* and the Noble Baron† behind me. One of my objections to the system proposed for the formation of the constituency of the boroughs and towns is its uniformity, and which objection was, by the by, mentioned by one of my Noble Friends. The electors are all the householders, payers of a rent of ten pounds and upwards; these householders, in towns in the South of England—I mean the counties of Kent, Sussex, Surry, Hants, Berkshire, and Oxford—will consist of the occupiers of every house in such towns as will not require a supplement under the Bill to be allotted by the Commissioners: these will be generally the shopkeepers—a class of persons of all others the most likely to combine in political views,—and to be acted upon by political clubs and societies of the description of that formed some months ago in the Strand, with a view to assist these newly-formed corporations in selecting their representatives in Parliament.

It is true that this society dissolved itself as soon as its exist-

* Lord Harrowby.

† Lord Wharncliffe.

ence was observed upon here or in the other House of Parliament. But political combination among these voters in boroughs and towns will hereafter be much more probable than it has been heretofore among the various interests of which the borough constituency has been formed.

These combinations, or the influence of such an association as I have described and has existed, would be very injurious to the public interests. I beg your Lordships besides to observe, that in nearly every town not requiring a supplement, every householder will have a vote, including daily labourers, every description of menial servant, waiters, hostlers, postilions at inns, and such like. In respect to counties, it appears that sixty-two members are to be added to this branch of the representation; of which fifty to counties to be divided, two to Yorkshire, and ten to counties which are to have three members each. An addition is to be made to the county constituency by enabling ten-pound copyholders to vote as well as freeholders and leaseholders holding tenements of fifty pounds yearly rent, and even occupiers of land paying that sum.

I cannot consider that this system will place the landed interest in the same relation towards the commercial or manufacturing interest, as that in which it stands at present. I doubt the county representation, as it stands at present, being capable of protecting the landed interest of the country without the assistance of the Members of the close boroughs. These are the true protectors of the landed interest of the country. The increase of riches in all towns, owing to the vast increase of manufactures and commerce, has given great influence to the inhabitants of towns in all county elections. This influence will be increased by giving votes to copyholders and holders of fifty-pound leases: these are generally inhabitants of towns and shopkeepers. Throughout the whole of some counties in England, there is not a single acre of land, not in a town, held by a lease.

Towns placed in schedules A and B, deprived of their members, will continue to influence the elections of members for the counties in which they are situated—which elections will be farther influenced by other arrangements of the Bill; giving votes to the freeholders of certain counties of towns in the elections of neighbouring counties.

The members for counties will therefore be nearly as much under the control of the constituency residing in towns, as the Members for the towns themselves will. But, my Lords, the question for us to consider, in the formation of this new system, is, not only what is the system which will best maintain the balance between the county interest and the town interest, but what will best form for the country a government. That is

the most important point for our consideration, and for the people. We must take care that after all this shall be done, there will be a government in the country.

We must consider not only the representation of England, but likewise that of Scotland and Ireland. In respect to Scotland and its representation, I do not know enough of either to pronounce whether the representation ought or ought not to be reformed; but I must repeat the words of a Noble Lord, whose loss I shall never cease to lament, respecting that country (I mean the late Earl of Liverpool), 'that Scotland was the best conditioned country in Europe.' I believe I may say that it is one of the best governed countries in the world; and I am sure that for the last sixty or seventy years it has been the most prosperous.

We are bound to look at what is about to be done in respect to the representation of Scotland. In counties in Scotland, freeholders, leaseholders, copyholders (allowing for the difference of tenure), and occupiers of land paying a rent of fifty pounds a year, are to have votes the same as in the counties in England. The inhabitants of towns will have the same influence over the elections for counties as in England; but this influence will be more powerful in Scotland than in England, because there are more large towns in Scotland, which, under the system, will not send representatives of their own, than there will be in England. The county members from Scotland can no longer be reckoned upon as supporters of the landed interest. The franchises of the borough towns in Scotland will be given to ten-pound householders, as in England; and these will, of course, be in what is called the commercial or manufacturing interest.

In respect to Ireland, the change is the same as in England and Scotland. In Ireland, there are few holders of land excepting upon lease. But every tenant upon every estate will have a vote for a county. In the towns ten-pound householders are to vote. These towns may be divided into two classes, close corporations and counties of towns. The first were formed by King James the First, for the purpose of supporting in Parliament the establishment of the Church of England in Ireland, upon which I will say a word or two presently. The returns for these corporations are now to be made by the ten-pound householders of these same towns.

In counties of towns the voters are to be the resident free-men of the corporation, and forty-shilling freeholders, as at present, and resident ten-pound householders. All these arrangements depart from those of the Acts of 1828. Those Acts left the right of election in corporations and in counties of

towns, as they had been settled and left at the Union. They deprived forty-shilling freeholders of their right of voting for members of counties, because it was supposed that the exercise of that right gave an undue preponderating influence to persons professing the Roman Catholic religion.

The fifty-pound leaseholders will, under the new arrangement, take the place of the forty-shilling freeholders, and all will equally be the tool of the priest. For the close corporations established by King James, ten-pound householders are to vote. These are all Roman Catholics.

In counties of towns we had refused to deprive forty-shilling freeholders of their franchise. The freemen of these corporations are generally, if not always, Protestants, and they can be increased without limitation. The freeholders are generally Roman Catholics. We did not think proper to alter the balance between the two, by leaving to the corporations the unlimited power of increasing its freemen, while the forty-shilling freehold right should have been extinguished. But the Noble Lords have gone to work in another way, and, having first deprived non-resident freemen of these counties of towns, who are Protestants, of their votes, they have left untouched the Roman Catholic forty-shilling freeholders, and have besides added to the constituency of those counties of towns all the ten-pound householders. These are likewise Roman Catholics. The Noble Lords have thus had the merit of establishing a Roman Catholic predominant interest in every county of a town in Ireland, in every close corporation formed for the protection of the Church of England, and in every county.

I will refer presently to the consequences of these arrangements upon the interests of the Church of England in Ireland. In the mean time, I beg your Lordships to observe, that the Irish representation in the Imperial Parliament cannot be considered as in the interest of the land.

The due balance between the landed interest and the commercial and manufacturing interest in Parliament must be considered a matter of small importance, in comparison with the more important object of considering what will be the sort of House of Commons which such a constituency, so formed, will give us.

Throughout the whole of the empire, persons in the lowest condition of life, liable to, and even existing under the most pernicious influences, are to have votes, or, in other words, are to exercise political power. Persons in those stations of life do exercise political power already; but in few places in large masses preponderating over the influence of other classes of society. What must we expect when these lower classes will

preponderate everywhere? We know what sort of representatives are returned by the places I have described. What are we to expect when the whole representation, or nearly the whole, will be of the same description?

We hear sometimes of Radical Reform; and we know that the term applies to universal suffrage, vote by ballot, annual parliaments, and their consequences. But I declare, that looking at these changes pervading every part of the representation, root and branch destroying or changing everything that has existed, even to the relative numbers of the representatives from the three kingdoms fixed by treaty, I should call this a radical reform, rather than reform of any other description. Is there no danger that, bad as what is proposed is, it will go further than would appear to be contemplated by the Noble Lords? A Noble Friend of mine has stated the danger which will result from this measure in consequence of the principle on which it stands. It stands, with respect to large towns, on the principle of population. Certain towns are selected to send two Members because they have above twenty thousand inhabitants. Certain others to send one Member because they have above nine or ten thousand inhabitants.

There is in reserve a number of about thirty or forty Members not yet allotted to any constituency. Will it be possible to refuse to extend the right of sending Members to Parliament to any town or parish, which may prove that its numbers exceed ten or twenty thousand inhabitants?

But we are told that this is not a question of numbers. How does it happen that there are four or five most beautiful, rich, and flourishing county towns in England placed in schedule B? These county towns are not only rich in themselves, and by the settlements of gentry residing in their neighbourhood, but they are more populous than is required in order to continue in the enjoyment of their accustomed number of representatives.

It happens, however, that a part of the population of each inhabit a part of the existing town, not in, but contiguous to the corporation as fixed by its ancient charters; such limits not containing four thousand souls, the numbers required. We are then told that numbers have nothing to do with the various settlements of the representation under this Bill!

Taking the whole view of this system of representation to be established in England, Scotland, and Ireland, I cannot but consider that the House of Commons returned by it, will be a democratical assembly of the worst description; that radical reform, vote by ballot, and all the evil consequences to be expected from the deliberations of such an assembly, must

follow from its establishment. I entreat your Lordships to pause before you agree to establish such a system in your country.

But we are told that the people wish for this measure ; and when we express our sense of the danger which attends it on account of the democratical power which it tends to establish, an endeavour is made to calm our apprehensions by the assurance that the people are attached to the government of King, Lords, and Commons.

If we are to rely upon that feeling of the people,—if we are to adopt this measure because it is the pleasure of the people, and because they are attached to the government of King, Lords, and Commons, why do not we at once adopt the measure which we know that the people prefer,—I mean radical reform ; that is to say, universal suffrage, vote by ballot, and annual parliaments ? If we are to make a change, there can be no reason for not going the full length that the people wish, if we can be sure that the measure will not injure the government, that to which they are attached, of King, Lords, and Commons.

But before we go further, it is desirable that we should examine what is the government of King, Lords, and Commons, as established in this kingdom. In this government the King is at the head of everything. All the power is in his hands. He is the head of the church, the head of the law. Justice is administered in his name. He is the protector of the peace of the country, the head of its political negotiations, and of its armed force,—not a shilling of public money can be expended without his order and signature. . But, notwithstanding these immense powers, the King can do nothing that is contrary to law, or to the engagements of himself or his predecessors. The King calls Parliament to assist him with its counsels *de arduis regni*, and those are responsible for his acts who carry them into execution. His ministers are responsible not only for the legality, but for the prudence and fitness of his acts. To whom are they responsible ? To this and the other House of Parliament, to the latter principally, on account of the greater activity of its inquisitorial power,—on account of its possessing exclusively the power of the purse, and for other reasons. Every act of the government, or of the King, is liable to be brought under discussion in, and is, in fact, controlled by the House of Commons ; and for this reason alone, it is important that we should consider of what description of men the House of Commons is likely to be composed, when we are discussing a question of Parliamentary Reform, in order that we may be quite certain that they will exercise their high functions with wisdom and discretion.

It was on these grounds that I some time ago called upon the Noble Earl to state by what influence he intended to carry on the King's government in Parliament, according to the principles fixed at the period of the Revolution, and in practice from that period to this, when this Reform Bill should be passed. The Noble Lord answered immediately, not by means of corruption. I am aware of that, my Lords. I am convinced that the Noble Lord is incapable of resorting to such means, as I hope he believes that I am incapable of resorting to them. I did not consider this any answer to my question, which I repeated in a subsequent discussion, on a motion by my Noble Friend the Noble Baron behind me. The Noble Earl said that the government had nothing to do with such questions; that Parliament was to decide for itself; and that there was no necessity for the interference of government.

I beg your Lordships to consider what are the questions which in every week, and on every day, are brought under the discussion of the House of Commons,—questions affecting the honour, the interests, the rights, the property of every individual in the country, which the King is bound by his oath to protect, and in the protection of which, all are equally interested. They are questions regarding the proceedings of courts of justice, regarding the use of the public force, and hundreds of others, which occur daily, in which every individual is interested. I put legislation out of the question: but can the King from that throne give to his subjects the necessary protection for their rights and property? No, my Lords. It is only by the influence of property over the elections of Members of the House of Commons, and by the influence of the Crown and of this House, and of the property of the country upon its proceedings, that the great powers of such a body as the House of Commons can be exercised with discretion and safety. The King could not perform the duties of his high station, nor the House of Lords, if the House of Commons were formed on the principle and plan proposed by this Bill.

There is one institution which would become peculiarly liable to attack in such a House of Commons, to which I wish to draw the attention of the Right Reverend Bench, and that is, the establishment of the Church of England in Ireland. This church is the object of a fundamental Article of the treaty of Union between the two countries, and is secured by Acts of both Parliaments, and the King is besides sworn to maintain its right and possessions; can any man believe that, when the representatives for Ireland come to be elected in the manner

proposed by the Bill, the Church of England in Ireland can be maintained?

I have already shown that these representatives must be elected under the influence of the Roman Catholic hierarchy.—Who are those who now show the greatest hostility to the church, its rights and possessions?—the members for populous places. The reason is, that the deprivation of the church of their property is one of the popular objects of the day. The object of the Bill is, and its effect will be, to increase the number of this description of Members in Parliament, and to render the influence of this party predominant and irresistible.

I believe the Noble Earl has already found the Members returned by Ireland, under this influence, very inconvenient to himself, upon more than one occasion; and it appears, that the Right Honourable Gentleman who conducts the affairs of Ireland in the House of Commons was under the necessity, very lately, of giving up a measure which he thought important for the benefit and peace of Ireland, because the Members from Ireland, of this party, were opposed to it. How can the Noble Lord suppose, that the Church of England can be protected, or even the Union itself preserved in a reformed Parliament? There is no man, who considers what the government of King, Lords, and Commons is, and the details of the manner in which it is carried on, who must not see that Government will become impracticable when the three branches shall be separate; each independent of the other, and uncontrolled in its action by any of the existing influences.

A Noble Earl, who has spoken on this side of the House, has made an observation to your Lordships which well deserves your attention. The Noble Earl has told you, that if you increase but a little the democratic power in the state, the step can never be withdrawn. Your Lordships must continue in the same course till you have passed through the miseries of a revolution, and thence to a military despotism, and the evils which attend that system of government. It is not denied, that this Bill must increase beyond measure the democratic power of the state—that it must constitute in the House of Commons a fierce democracy:—what must be the consequences, your Lordships will judge.

I will not detain your Lordships by adverting to the merits of the system of government which has existed up to the present moment, upon which my opinion is by no means altered. No man denies that we have enjoyed great advantages; that we have enjoyed a larger share of happiness, comfort, and

prosperity, for a long course of years, than were ever enjoyed by any nation; that we have more riches, the largest fortunes, personal as well as real, more manufactures and commerce, than all the nations of Europe taken together; the richest, most extensive, most peopled, and most prosperous foreign colonies and possessions, that any nation ever possessed. There is not an important position in the world, whether for the purpose of navigation, commerce, or military defence, that does not belong to us.

If this democratic assembly should once be established in England, does any man believe that we should continue to enjoy these vast advantages? But a democracy has never been established in any part of the world, that it has not immediately declared war against property—against the payment of the public debt—and against all the principles of conservation, which are secured by, and are in fact the principal objects of the British Constitution, as it now exists. Property and its possessors will become the common enemy. I do not urge this argument as one in which your Lordships are peculiarly interested: it is not you alone, nor even other proprietors, who are interested in the protection of property; the whole people, middling classes as well as the lower orders, are interested in this subject. Look at the anxiety prevailing in every part of London, in respect to the great revolution to be made by this Bill. My Noble Friend, the Noble Baron behind me, has been ridiculed for adverting to the opinions of tradesmen in Bond-street and St. James's-street. Those in Bond-street consist of more than two hundred respectable persons, who are well able to form an opinion of the effect of this Bill upon the resources of themselves, the middling classes, and the poor, as they supply the luxuries of persons in easier circumstances residing in that quarter of the town. Anything which can affect the resources of their customers must be interesting to them, and they do feel that this Bill must affect property, private expenditure, and the resources of themselves and of those whom they employ. The Noble Lord on the other side, who adverted to this topic, greatly underrated the wealth of these tradesmen. I know of one, residing in Bond-street, who employs at all times from two thousand to four thousand workmen, whose trade depends, as well as the employment of this body of people, upon the expenditure of his customers: is he not interested in upholding the public faith and the system of property now established in England? Are not the people, of all classes and descriptions down to the lowest, interested in the maintenance of our extensive manufactures and commerce, in the conservation of our enormous

dominions abroad, and the continued respect of all nations?

If I am right in thinking that this fierce democracy will be established in the House of Commons, does any man believe that that harmony can continue between the King and his Government and the House of Commons, so necessary to insure to both general respect, and to the King's Government the strength which is necessary to enable his Majesty to protect and keep in order his foreign dominions, and to insure the obedience of their inhabitants? We shall lose these colonies and foreign possessions, and with them our authority and influence abroad.

There is no instance of any country having maintained its strength or its influence in its foreign possessions, or the respect of foreign nations, during the existence of internal troubles and disturbance; and there is none of the existence, without such troubles, of a government consisting of King, Lords, and Commons, independent of each other, and the members of the latter depending solely upon the popular choice, and being delegates of the people. We have had an example in England of a House of Commons which was independent of the influence of the crown and of this House, and of the property of the country. After banishing or imprisoning the most respectable members of this House, turning the Spiritual Lords out of it, and murdering their Sovereign, they voted the House of Lords useless. I will read your Lordships the account given by a man who was knowing in his time (Oliver Cromwell), of what this House became. 'The Parliament which had so vigorously withstood the encroachments of the royal power, became themselves too desirous of absolute authority; and not only engrossed the legislative, but usurped the executive power.

'All causes, civil and criminal, all questions of property, were determined by committees, who, being themselves the legislature, were accountable to no law, and for that reason their decrees were arbitrary, and their proceedings violent. Oppression was without redress, unjust sentence without appeal; there was no prospect of ease or intermission. The Parliament had determined never to dissolve themselves.

'At length the army interfered. They soon perceived that, unless they made one regulation more, and crushed this many-headed monster, they had hitherto ventured their lives to little purpose, and had, instead of assuring their own and their country's liberty, only changed one kind of slavery for another.'

This is the account of the state of a House of Commons

acting independently of all influence, and of the state to which it brought the country. My Lords, I have stated to you what will be the probable action of the system established by the bill on the government of the country—that is the real question—what is the nature of our government, and what the share of the House of Commons in its details; in what manner it controls them all; and how important the composition of that House is to the very existence of Government. I have shown you in what manner the protection of property by Government is necessary, and the dependence of all the sources of our national prosperity upon the continuance of a good understanding between the King and his Parliament. I have stated my reasons for thinking that all these will be destroyed by the Bill. I have likewise stated to your Lordships my opinion that the King's Ministers, by the speech which they had recommended to the King to deliver from the throne, on the 22d of April, on the dissolution of Parliament, had excited the spirit which pervaded the late elections of members to serve in Parliament, and had occasioned the election of delegates for a particular purpose, instead of Members of Parliament.

My Lords, the King's speech, upon the occasion to which I have referred, has materially altered the state of this question. The people have been called upon by the King to deliberate upon it, and have been led to expect that a change would be made. In recommending to your Lordships to vote against this bill, I earnestly intreat you to avoid pledging yourselves, whether in public or private, against any other measure that may be brought forward. I recommend to you to keep yourselves free to adopt any measure upon this subject which shall secure to this country the blessings of a government. By so doing, you will perform your duty by your country, and will deserve its thanks, and the gratitude of posterity.

THE END

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